(b) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(c) the reaction of Government on the findings of survey and the steps taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M. V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) to (c) The Global Indian Survey conducted by A.C. Nielsen for B.B.C. World gives information regarding media consumption, cultural uniqueness and international interest of Indian consumers. The survey is an important tool for advertisers and international marketers interests in India.

Guidelines to Develop Backward Districts of country

3577. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have finalized the guidelines to develop the backward districts of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons for delay; and

(d) the time by when these are likely to be finalized and implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M. V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Guidelines for the Backward Regions Grant Fund will be finalized after obtaining necessary approvals to the scheme.

Special status to Bihar

†3578. SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the proposal passed by the Bihar Legislative Assembly in which a demand has been made to grant the special status to Bihar;

(b) whether any memorandum or request has been received from the State Government in this regard; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, Government's view thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M. V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Special Category State status is approved by the National Development Council to States which are pre-dominantly of hilly terrain with large tribal population, located on sensitive international border areas with underdeveloped socio-economic infrastructure, low revenue base, non-viable finances and overall economic backwardness. Since Bihar does not fulfil all these criteria, according Special Category State status to Bihar is not being considered.

Upgradation and Maintenance of National Highways

3579. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of National Highways are in need of extensive repair;

(b) if so, the details thereof, highway-wise;

(c) whether Government propose to adopt new technology in order to upgrade and maintain some National Highways;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the new technology is economical; and

(f) if so, the savings to be affected in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K. H. MUNIAPPA): (a) and (b) Maintenance and repair of National Highways is a continuous process and the National Highways are maintained in traffic worthly condition within the available resources.

(c) to (f) The Government encourages promotion of proven new technologies for development and maintenance of National Highways subject to their economic viability. In this regard, identification, the development of new technologies and their adoption in Indian condition is a continuous process. Adoption of such new technologies is aimed at reduction in the life cycle cost.